

# THE TWILIGHT ZONE

## All Too Human Computer

A computer known as the neural net, built to simulate the way a baby's mind works, has gone on strike, due to what its inventor, Mr Michael Gera, called "an attack of boredom".

Scientists from the Imperial College in London calling themselves the Neural Computing Group instructed the computer to turn into a "neural net", which is a collection of dozens of electronic devices that mimic the operation of nerve cells in the brain.

In its initial learning stage, the machine was programmed to generate babble, and when it hit on a meaningful word, the machine was given a suitable response. The machine soon picked up a crude vocabulary.

The second learning stage involved showing objects, say the picture of a cat, to the computer, and telling it the word it corresponded to. The computer was then shown different cats, and the machine learnt to associate the word cat with all of them.

The Neural Computing Group found that the machine learnt to identify new versions of cat, but that when they showed cats that were too similar to permit new learning, the machine simply switched off.



## The Ugly Face of Crime

A pharmacy in Scarborough, London, was held up in January by a masked bandit demanding a treatment for acne. The man, wearing balaclava and dark glasses, held a gun at the shop assistant, handed her a bag, and told her to fill it up with spot cream.



## Video Nasty

British parents are outraged by a 30-minute video being shown to their children which is designed to turn them into vegetarians. The video, prepared by the powerful UK Vegetarian Society, depicts gory scenes of chickens having their throats slit and blood spurting from the head of a newly slaughtered bullock. Parents outraged by this anti-cruelty campaign have approached Britain's Secretary of Education, Kenneth Baker, to ban the video.

## Earth Defences Lowered

The Colombian aeronautical board placed a news blackout over an embarrassing incident involving a UFO that was seen over Colombia's international airport on February 9th. Weeks after the incident, several pilots and flight controllers came forward to say they saw the bright unidentified light. The embarrassment was caused when the flight controllers, believing it to be a private plane, gave the UFO its landing instructions.



## None of Your Business

TV series star Ed Asner has recently disclosed his encounter with UFOs. In 1952, while he was serving in the Signal Corps at Fort Monmouth in New Jersey, observations of saucer-shaped craft were almost a daily occurrence, and they were tracked on radar at incredible speeds. One day he was called outside to witness a whole formation of saucers which were flying overhead. The army took much film of the craft, and pursuit planes were sent up, but were easily outdistanced by the UFOs.

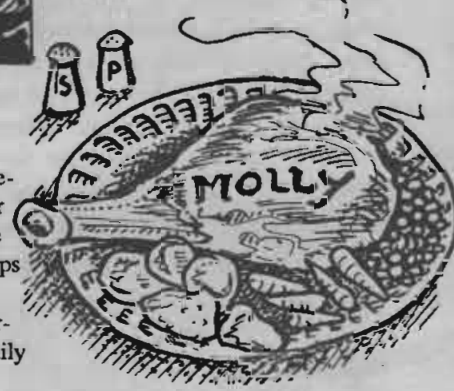
Next day, Asner and his fellow soldiers were paraded in the base square and were sworn to secrecy. An officer told them, "If you went home yesterday and told your wife you saw a UFO, you will tell her today that you didn't."

Asner said, "The army made it clear we were just a bunch of enlisted slob and flying saucers weren't our business."

## Feeding Time at the Zoo

One of Stockholm's Skansen Park Zoo greatest attractions was a bear cub which had no name so the zoo ran a national competition to give the cub a name. Malin Bergman, 15, won, and the cub was named Molly. However, because of limited space due to the birth of a new bear litter last spring, the bear population had to be culled. When the zoo could not find a home for the 18-month-old Molly, Molly was shot, last November.

Like good conservationists, the zoo put Molly to good use even in death. Molly was raffled off amongst the zoo staff, and the winners got to take home her meat. An upset Malin said, "How could they? How can staff give a cub a name, look after her for a year or two, and then end up sneaking her onto the dinner table?"



## The Spirit of Medicine

A dozen international researchers met in Canberra in March to discuss new research indicating that the spirits of ancestors can attach themselves to bodies and cause diseases ranging from terminal cancer to mental problems such as manic depression. The conference heard that spirit entities can account for as much as 80% of human illnesses. Professor Zensaku Yoshizawa of Japan said, "After 30 years I am now astonished by the fact that the cause of many fatal diseases, which are beyond medical science, lies in the spiritual dimension."

## Trousers Off

A riot was caused during a Rugby League fixture at Port Moresby's Kundiawa Oval when the Minister for Police, Peter Kuman, led fans onto the field, made rude signs to opposing fans, and dropped his trousers. Angry spectators climbed the fence and headed across the field towards him, but the Police Minister hid inside a police van parked nearby. New Guinea police fired tear gas into the crowd to control them. Police Commissioner David Tasion has ordered an inquiry and local leaders are calling on Prime Minister Paias Wingti to discipline him.



## Jobs for Ufologists

The University of Manitoba's geophysics department has approached one of their graduate students, Chris Rutkowski, to do a thesis on UFOs. The university wants Rutkowski to investigate the theories of Michael Persinger's book *Earth Lights* which claims that UFOs are really charged plasma balls emitted from rock fractures during seismic activity.

Rutkowski had already criticized the Earth Lights theory in geophysical journals, but expressed concern about the offer, saying, "Sure it's an interesting subject, but it won't get me a job."



## The Long and Short of Apartheid

Johannesburg Police arrested Dan Sebegodi and Lulu Tesheola for being in possession of the forbidden book *The Life of Steve Biko*. However, Dan and Lulu were dwarfs, and were playing *Bashful and Happy* in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* at the Alexander Theatre in Johannesburg. The resourceful theatre director, Hannibal Wayne, decided that the show must go on, and so he and his stage manager played the parts of the two missing dwarfs, even though both of them are over six feet tall.



## Logjam at the Morgue

Miami has finally opened a \$A14.3 million morgue to handle an overflow of bodies, after years of overcrowding at the Dade County morgue, the busiest in the south-east US. For the past six years, a refrigerated van seized in a drug raid has been parked outside the morgue and has been used as a temporary storage for bodies.

## Trousers On

The Minister of the Interior of the African nation Guinea has been trying to persuade Guineans to give up their traditional sarongs in favour of the Western style dress of shirts and trousers. He ordered 10,000 Guineans into the Nawa Peace Stadium and repeated his demand. As added persuasion, he sprayed machine gun fire over the crowd, while *The Best Things In Life Are Free* was played over the loudspeakers.



## Butterflies

Upsetting the delicate balance of nature can have unforeseen consequences. Growers of cocaine in Peru have had to destroy over 20,000 hectares of coca plants because of unprecedented swarms of Peruvian malumbia butterflies, which feed exclusively on coca leaves. The butterflies are usually rare. The Peruvian government plans to air-drop pupae of the small white butterflies on the illegal crops growing in the remote jungle, accessible only by canoe or by air. The state-owned National Coca Company has cautioned that it would be difficult to contain the spread of the butterflies only to illegal crops. Peru and Bolivia are the only two countries that allow farmers to grow some coca legally. Chewing the leaves of coca plants is a part of highland Indian customs.

## The Gay Yeti

Yetis may be an endangered species, but are doing little to endear themselves to human beings. Chinese newspapers have published numerous reports of soldiers being accosted and anally raped by a male yeti. Last year, the Wild Man Research Society published a report containing reports of sexual assaults by male and female yetis.

One report told of a soldier who went missing in a forest, only to be seen later by his comrades jumping to his death from the mouth of a cave. Examination of the dead soldier showed signs of brutal sexual interference. At the same time soldiers saw a shaggy wild woman swinging away on a vine from the cave mouth.

The Chinese Government has given the BBC permission to hunt the yeti for a documentary they plan for this year. The BBC team, headed by a former climber of Mt Everest, hopes to find answers to these sexual attacks, and to find whether some males of the species might be homosexual.



## Electric Man

36-year-old Xue Dibo, a factory worker in the western Chinese city of Urumqi, has started emitting electric currents. In January, Xue began feeling strange sensations, and then in February he knocked his wife over with an electric shock when he touched her hair. Xue also gets powerful shocks when he touches anything metal. He is being examined by local doctors.